

A TRAINED NURSE'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE EMMANUEL MOVEMENT

By EDITH M. AMBROSE, R.N.

Graduate of the Presbyterian Hospital, New York

WHEN one considers that our whole life is made up of suggestion, and that no impression on the mind good or bad is lost, one has some inkling of its power. The use of suggestion is, of course, no new idea, except in the sense that until the latter part of the nineteenth century, no conscious use has been made of it, in this country, for the alleviation of suffering.

In an article entitled "Psychotherapy and the Trained Nurse," in the June number of the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING*, by Walter Morrit, Ph.D., many reasons are set forth why the trained nurse should make a serious study of the psychology of suggestion for use in the treatment of nervous disorders. It seems to me that we might even go a step further and use it in the treatment of all diseases: is not every ill person more or less nervous? and are not good suggestions as effectual for the well as the ill? I can recall many instances of the power of suggestion and autosuggestion in my hospital experience, but one example comes vividly to my mind. It is that of a man brought in by the ambulance suffering acute abdominal pain. While waiting for the doctor to arrive, I did the usual thing and put a thermometer in his mouth. Being suddenly called away, I quite forgot the poor man and left him for fifteen minutes holding the thermometer, but on my return he exclaimed, "I feel very much better already and would like a glass of water to take the taste out of my mouth." A few minutes later he said to the doctor, "Doctor that medicine the nurse gave me did the trick, can't I have one more dose?" I explained all to the doctor who then ordered the dose repeated and the patient left the hospital the next day entirely cured. This was autosuggestion. How many instances of the miraculous power of the placebo can every nurse recall!

So much for its general use; the particular field for its conscious use is in the treatment of functional nervous disorders. A nurse who understood the giving of suggestive treatments and the directing of physical and mental relaxation,—in other words the re-educating of nervous people,—could, under the guidance of a physician practicing psychotherapy, be immensely valuable. When one reads Paul Dubois's book, "The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders," one is led to think

that every disease is controlled by the mind, and when one really thinks about it one is forced to admit that this is the case. A German physician in a book entitled "Dietetics of the Soul," says: "Much progress has already been made and the opinion is daily gaining ground, that not only the feebleness but the actual diseases of the present generation depend more on our moral than our physical condition; and that they cannot be prevented by the bracing systems or the hardening experiments of a Rousseau or a Salzmann—by exposure or cold baths. To guard against them, or, if God wills, to extirpate them, requires a higher culture and that, too, of different kind, and here the first step must begin with ourselves."

The principles of the Emmanuel Movement are plainly set forth in an article entitled, "The Emmanuel Movement from the Standpoint of a Patient," but in case my readers have not seen this pamphlet I quote from it: "The means employed may be classed under the following heads: I. Moral and spiritual re-education, (a) by personal interview; (b) by attendance at the Emmanuel class. II. Correcting the subconscious activity, (a) by waking suggestion; (b) by autosuggestion; (c) by profound suggestion; (d) by work."

In a word it is the curing of functional nervous disorders through the psychotherapeutic application of the religious ideal. The principles are further set forth in an inspiring article in the *July Century*, by Dr. Worcester himself, but nowhere are they more clearly demonstrated than in the life and work of Christ. If one studies Christ's method of healing one sees clearly that He used two principles, Faith and Suggestion and that He understood the use of the latter as no man or woman can hope to; the best we can do is to try to get His spirit into our work-a-day life and help others feel its power. From Dawson's "Life of Christ" I quote the following: "We have already seen that the closer we come to the personality of Jesus, the more does the conviction grow that there was an element in that personality which transcends all that we know of ordinary human nature. With a single glance or word He was able to produce immeasurable effects on individuals. Even in His last humiliation, when armed men rushed upon Him in the garden of Gethsemane, there streamed from Him a power that hurled them backwards, and brought them to their knees. Is it not then conceivable that this force of personality should have an extraordinary effect upon disease? A case in point suggests itself from the life of Catherine of Sienna. Father Raymond relates that in the time of plague in Sienna, he came home exhausted from his labors and felt himself sickening for death. Catherine then 'laid her pure hands upon him' and prayed over him,

and sat by his side till he fell asleep, and when he awoke he was perfectly well. The story suggests at once the case of healing by magnetic force or hypnotism, joined with strong faith in the person healed. Many of the cures wrought by Jesus suggest the same process. He usually demands faith in the sick person as a condition of the experiment He is besought to make."

Dr. Worcester in his use of the power of suggestion has brought health to many who considered such a thing utterly unattainable, and has also shown them through the power of Christ's ideals where their true happiness lay. It is interesting to read the many accounts of help received, which come daily through the mail to Dr. Worcester; and with his permission I insert a copy of one which will no doubt interest the readers of this article, as an example of suggestion through written advice: "Dear Dr. Worcester: I want to tell you how much you have helped us through the *Ladies Home Journal* article. I am the wife of a physician and was a trained nurse before marriage. Almost all of our married life my husband has been ill, and as we were very poor we had a struggle. He had an attack of tuberculosis (pulmonary), about a year after we were married, and we sold everything at a sacrifice and came out here. After a while the lung trouble ceased but strength did not return; there were digestive troubles and great nervous irritability. For about a year I have been sure, in my own mind, that the trouble was, now, largely nervous and was aggravated by a fear of relapse and prostration should he use the strength that was present. When I read your article on suggestion in natural sleep, I tried to use it to help us, but there were some difficulties. My husband and I slept in different rooms, that is, he still sleeps out of doors, and then I am a very sound sleeper, who can scarcely keep awake after the day's work is done, and he slept very badly. We are both Christians and have prayed daily for health to return. I tried drinking coffee, even taking caffein to keep awake, but could never find him asleep when I was ready to 'suggest.' One night I asked God very earnestly to help us to do this thing. I had great faith in its helping if I could do it, and then I went to sleep. I waked, it seemed that something said to me 'now, now!' and I sent my whole soul towards my husband and whispered the things I would have him believe, and as soon as I had done so I was asleep again. I was hardly fully awake at all but intensely conscious of what I wanted to tell him. We were in different parts of the house, I do not know what time of night it was, but I believe that God helped me to help my husband, for he awakened a new man full of energy and purpose, and free from all fear of not being able to do things, free from indigestion, headache, and nerves. He

has taken up and built up his practice, eats heartily, and sleeps soundly.

"Is it not wonderful? There have been one or two slight relapses but I have no fear and am very grateful to God and you. May He guide and sustain you in the work you are doing. The world is very full of sorrow and pain and how little we know of the powers God has put within us to better our conditions."

Dr. Worcester found many reasons why he should begin such a work; first his study of Christ, His work and His methods, and second his studies in physiological psychology, together with his association with Fechner, the great German psychologist and philosopher. These led him to see what right thinking might do towards bringing health and happiness to the human mind. To quote Dr. Worcester directly, he says: "From Fechner, Wundt, and James I learnt how delicate and powerful an instrument for the improvement of human life the modern psychology places in our hands," and, "If psychology has taught us to apply calming and helpful thoughts to the human mind, why should we not thankfully make use of its valuable aid?" Dr. Worcester hopes, as he says in his article, "to have an institute which shall include a small and beautiful psychopathic hospital and a school of sound learning. Here physicians, clergymen, psychologists, medical and theological students, and a select group of social workers could receive the instruction and experience necessary to qualify them in their several capacities to this work." This would of course include a post-graduate course for the nurse.

It seems to me that every nurse should be as careful in considering the individuality of her patient as the doctor in considering every part of the physiological body in making his diagnosis. If one is to help another, one must thoroughly understand his point of view, and the best way to get this is to think oneself in the place of the patient. If the nurse, in studying the patient, places herself in his position as far as possible, and calls forth his virtue and goodness she very soon gets his full confidence. As our German physician says, "Encourage your patient by the assumption that he possesses certain faculties and they will develop in him; look on him as capable of cultivation and he continues so." In this way she will see every possible opportunity to stretch out the helping hand until the rough places are made smooth, and by faith and good suggestion mountains of doubt and fear are removed.

The nurse who is best fitted to this work is the one who has passed the "flighty" stage, and has convinced herself that "egoism is the real curse of the human race" and that until man is freed from it he is unfit to take his place in society; "that all nature is but an echo of the

mind; and from her we learn the highest of all laws—that the real springs from the ideal; that the ideal by degrees remodels the world.” Where the patient is too ill to adopt a system of curative reading and exercise, he should associate with some one more powerful than himself and imbibe from that person the “bread and milk of mental health.” Faith in one’s own ideal is the key-note of success in this work and we must realize that faith and sound reason are the secrets of happiness and health. “Faith,” says Dante, “is the supreme energy by which the soul attaches itself to God, or good; through this union the life of God enters the body of man, making him a new creature, ennobling his purposes, renewing his mind, and purifying his love.” “The inner man is after all but one—one force—and the object of cultivation should be to give strength and direction to this force.” From all this one sees that in order to use this power to the best advantage, one must be convinced oneself. It is not enough for a nurse to know the power of suggestion through reading, she must have *felt* its power herself; having done so she will have far greater influence with her patient. Moreover if she consistently carries out her own suggestions, her words will carry double strength. She must also have a thorough knowledge of relaxation from the physiological standpoint, sitting, walking, and standing, as it is most important to get all strain off the nervous system, and her knowledge along these lines is of immense importance to the patient. She must not only be convinced that suggestion is good, but must scientifically understand how to use it from a psychological standpoint.

Here is a letter illustrating this point which I received from a patient last winter. “I think your suggestions as to sitting, standing, and walking were just what I needed. At any rate the thought that there was something definite I could do to improve my condition was a useful stimulus. If I can progress as far proportionately in the next six months as I have in the past six weeks, and keep what I have gained I shall be satisfied, no, delighted! I have reduced my hours of rest during the day from three to two, and find that even with this reduction I can spend an hour a day in some gallery or museum without getting too tired, and two months ago this seemed an ideal forever unattainable. The constant tenseness which has bothered me for five years has departed, except for a few hours at a time after some unusual exertion, and for nearly three weeks I have been free from insomnia, which had followed me for many months: Your letter came January 7, at a time when I was awfully depressed and discouraged with apparently no energy of mind or body, but since that time I have felt well, and if another such time comes, I shall remind myself that it is only temporary, and that

it may be the prelude to another period of gain such as the last six weeks has been. I have constantly suggested to myself relaxation and tranquillity and steadiness, and I feel that I respond more and more readily to the suggestion. Thank you again and again for your kindness in writing to me. Very gratefully, etc."

Another letter from a business man in Boston which bears witness to the efficacy of direct suggestion is as follows: "My dear Miss Ambrose: Your kindly letter with statement enclosed has just come to hand and I hasten to send my check in payment of your charge which is most satisfactory, inasmuch as I should find it very difficult to estimate in figures the worth of your very valuable services during the past months. I hasten to express again to you my very sincere appreciation of your kind efforts. I assure you that the services you have rendered, supplementary to the kindly start given by the good Dr. Worcester, have proved most valuable and efficacious. I can only hope that when others are similarly afflicted they may be as fortunate as I have been in finding such kind and efficient helpers." This man was a severe case of neurasthenia; not only did he recover but he did so without having to give up his business.

Physical, mental, and moral hygiene are subjects which such a nurse must have at her fingers' ends, she must know that true happiness and genuine virtue are based on self-guidance, she must not only "know," but "be." A faith in the power of the spirit within to heal the body is the power which we must constantly strengthen in each one of our patients. "The mind has also its bright point—a hidden sanctuary of clearness and serenity, whither no storms or nightly shadows can penetrate. Here should be our resting place—our house. Its preservation and enlargement should be a constant object of our care."

A NURSE OFF DUTY IN MEXICO *

By MRS. H. INGERSOLL

Graduate of the John Sealy Hospital, Galveston, Texas

It was not many days after our arrival at the Magdalena Smelter, where my husband was manager, before I found that I could help him in many ways. I had no household duties so it was something to keep me busy.

I took it upon my shoulders to count the pay roll. That does not

* Read before the Graduate Nurses' Association of Texas.